

Department of Planning and Development

Diane M. Sugimura, Director

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck, Chair, UDP Committee
Councilmember Richard Conlin
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen

FROM: Diane M. Sugimura

DATE: August 7, 2006

SUBJECT: Committee Briefing: DPD Monthly Update for August 9, 2006 Meeting

Land Use Workload Characteristics:

In the 2nd quarter of 2006, Land Use applications were up approximately 59% over 2nd quarter 2005 – 336 compared with 212 in 2005.

Platting actions (Lot Boundary Adjustments, Short Plats and Unit Lot Short Plats) made up about 45% of the MUP applications in the 2nd quarter of 2006, similar to the stats for the same time period in 2005. Review of platting actions continue on average to meet the 120-day performance goal for decisions. DPD published 152 platting decisions in the 2nd quarter of 2006, a 63% increase in volume for plats over 2nd quarter 2005. Unit Lot Subdivisions continue to constitute the majority of platting actions.

Design Review activity remains strong and above levels in 2005. In 2Q2006 we received 54 applications; 33 were EDG applications. In 2Q2005, we received 45 applications 4 of these were EDG applications.

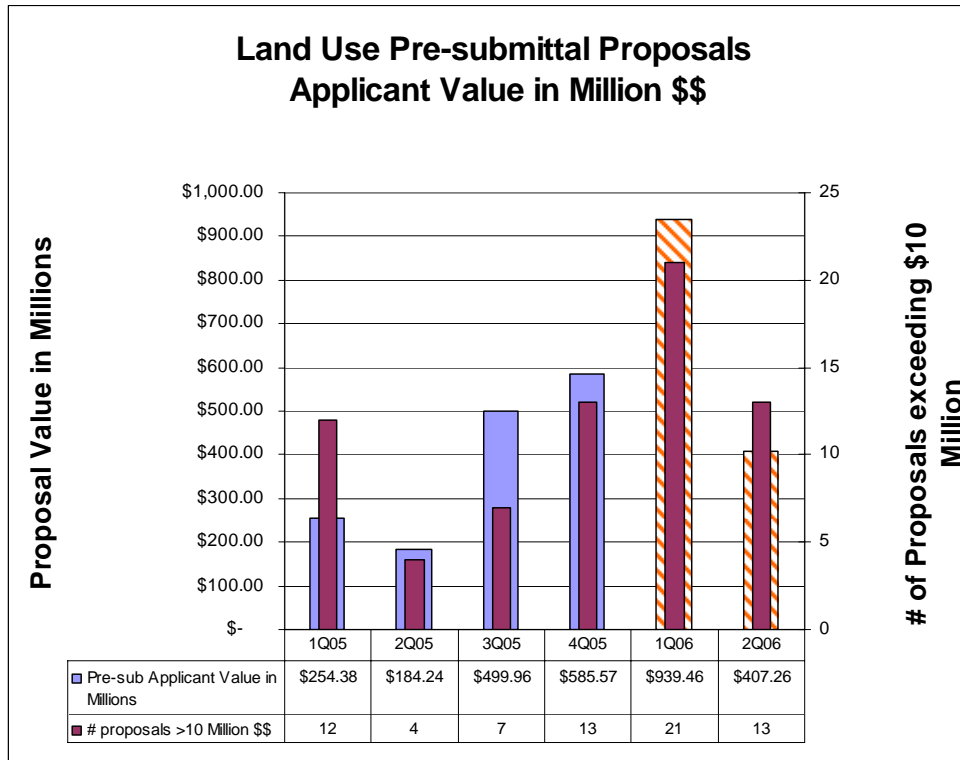
Administrative Conditional Use and Environmental Review continues at a much faster pace than in previous years. The increase compared with 2Q2005 was significant; 105 ACU/SEPA applications submitted in 2Q2006 compared to 38 in the same period last year. This increase in activity is primarily due to an industry increase in applications for telecommunication proposals.

Pre-submittal Activity in 2006

A comparison of pre-submittal activity makes it clear that we are seeing more complex, more significant projects. In the first two quarters of 2006, the number of projects valued at \$10



million or more are close to the total number of such projects in all of 2005. Most of these are highrise proposals in and around downtown Seattle, including mixed-use use and office towers.



Efficiency Measures:

We continue to focus our efforts on reducing review time on applications.

Reid-Middleton has hired a summer intern to help out with the large number of platting actions.

We are in the process of hiring 3-4 land use planners on contingent budget authority.

We anticipate results of the Short Plat pilot this quarter; a draft report is in preparation.

Preliminary results indicate that creating a separate queue for these projects assists in managing everyone's workload.

We brought in two former employees as part-time TES, to focus on coaching applicants.

This frees up time for staff to review more plans.

Every Tuesday in August we will have a plan review blitz for certain units. Intake appointments have been blocked on these days, and we have supervisors helping our TES staff with coaching, while the rest of the team reviews plans. Review staff who normally would be focused on coaching, screening projects and reviewing many 48 hour projects, are being redirected to focus on performing Initial Reviews on backlogged projects. This week, the zoning team reviewed more than 80 projects that were in the backlog. This is roughly twice the usual production level.

Building Permit Activity

Volume for construction permits stood at 4,860 through the end of June. That is 13% ahead of our projection. Intake value through June was \$1.544 billion. If the pace continues that would put us 65% above our projection of \$1.75 billion for the whole year or approximately \$2.9 billion in intake value.

Building Permit Reviews: We received 655 applications for simple permits in June, with 87.5% receiving their initial review within the target time. We are exceeding our goal of 80% for the simple permits.

However, 232 applications for complex permits were received in June, with only 26.2% receiving their initial review within the target time of 6 weeks. We achieved our target of 70% by the tenth week. This performance is reflective of the backlog that has developed due to the intake volumes significantly exceeding our available review capacity. We have posted a note on our website, indicating that we are about four to six weeks beyond our due dates. Staff have indicated that they noticed the difference immediately. The number of people calling wondering why their project is not done by the due date has decreased substantially, which means that staff have more time to do project review. Our experience has shown that most applicants understand longer timelines these days, as long as they have a fairly accurate assessment of timing.

Code Compliance

Condo Conversions Update: The unprecedented boom in conversion of rental apartments to condominiums continues. Thus far in 2006, we have received inspection applications for 1,162 units. If this pace continues, we expect to receive requests for well over 2,000 units by year end. Last year the total number of units that we inspected for conversion was 1,551.

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2004	32	30	53	16	22	46	123	61	0	31	13	3	430
2005	0	102	14	51	7	300	130	14	538	142	109	144	1551
2006	97	104	340	98	436	137	166	45					1423 y-t-d

This level of demand has diverted a significant portion of our senior inspector resources from work on violation cases, particularly unfit buildings and premises, and other complex enforcement issues.

Former Cannery Workers' Building at 213 S Main St. This is a vacant building that was damaged in the earthquake. There is an active permit for repair (renewed a couple of times), but no action. Several months ago the owner stopped responding to our inquiries. Meanwhile, the building remains in a hazardous condition (the roof has caved in, but it is boarded up). After a brief trial, the judge ordered full penalties plus costs. The defendant will be informed of the judgment and after 30 days it can be certified. Most likely we will

use the judgment for leverage to get the site repaired rather than seek payment of the full amount. Remedying the problem is complicated by its historic status and its location in Pioneer Square.

This and That Arcade at 9509 Rainier Ave. S. This site was brought to DPD's attention a few months ago. DPD issued a Notice of Violation because the use was not established by permit. The Police and Fire Departments have been heavily involved with the use. There were repeated violations of the occupancy limits for the building and significant criminal activity. The owners and tenant did not respond to the Notice of Violation, and it was referred to the City Attorney's Office for prosecution. Meanwhile, a 15 year old girl was seriously injured and then falsely imprisoned by the tenant. DPD issued an Emergency Land Use Order requiring the building to be vacated and closed. The business is now closed.

Planning Activities

Waterfront Plan: We will continue to work with Central Staff on Council's review of the Concept Plan. We understand Council's concerns about releasing funds for the Public Realm Plan, but we are now facing a situation where the engineering team from the Viaduct replacement project will be making urban design decisions. We hope that Council will soon release the funds so that we can have an urban design consultant on board. We had delayed finalizing the RFQ, but may proceed with issuance so as to be ready to sign a contract when Council releases the funds.

NBDS: We have briefed all members of the committee on the Green Factor and proposed parking requirements. We look forward to the committee vote on this. Because Council is short on staff who work on land use issues, we are helping to prepare the final legislation. We still hope that Council can take final action on this legislation this fall.

Dravus: We held a public meeting on July 13. There was a lot of support for upzoning the area though there is still concern from the industrial community about the impacts on adjacent industrial property. We hope to get legislation to Council in the fall.

SLU Neighborhood Plan Update: We have completed the update, and are very pleased with the outcome and the level of support in the community. Neighborhood plan policies are incorporated into the Comp Plan legislation. We will now begin work on rezoning analyses and will likely conduct an EIS next year on some of the proposed zoning changes.

Technology Advancements

We continue to work on improvements to our much used website, in terms of providing access and ease-of-use to a broad range of information for customers and staff. We are currently working on a facelift, to create better connections between the pages and functions of our site. In June we launched our new Activity Locator, which allows the viewer to see permitting and land use activity using an interactive map powered by Google's eye-catching map technology. One can narrow the search according to location, or look citywide for a

particular type of permit or notice. This is still a prototype, and can be viewed on our Research website at www.seattle.gov/dpd/Research. We are seeking feedback from users.

As a reminder, below are some of the on-line services:

- Apply for an electrical permit
- Request an inspection
- Check the status of a permit
- Report a code violation
- Download codes, forms and publications
- Catch-up on news and events
- Comment on proposed land use actions
- Review properties using the GIS mapping feature
- Follow progress on City Planning projects

Public Outreach in Coming Weeks

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| Aug. 28 | Robert Dunphy, ULI Sr. Fellow, Transportation and Infrastructure
“Rising Gas Prices: Consumer Crisis or Wake-Up Call?”
Monday, August 28, 5:30-7 p.m. at Seattle Central Library Auditorium |
| Sept. 20 | Jonathan F.P. Rose presentation related to green buildings, historic
preservation and affordable housing, followed by a jazz reception
Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2006, 7-9:30 p.m. at the Bertha Landes Room |